

Under Secretary Ball Interviewed on "Issues and Answers"

Following is the transcript of an interview with Under Secretary Ball on the American Broadcasting Company's radio and television program "Issues and Answers" on February 10.

Press release 78 dated February 11

The Announcer: From Washington, "Issues and Answers" brings you the Under Secretary of State, the Honorable George W. Ball.

Secretary Ball: Here are the issues.

Do we believe Premier Khrushchev's claim that Soviet troops are in Cuba only to train Cubans?

How can we save the Western alliance?

Will we solve our crisis with Canada?

Now for the answers to the issues from Under Secretary of State George W. Ball. Here to interview Secretary Ball are ABC commentator Edward P. Morgan, and with the first question, ABC State Department correspondent John Scali.

New Government in Iraq

Mr. Scali: Mr. Secretary, welcome to "Issues and Answers."

Let's start off with a question which is in the headlines only a few hours. There are reports that there is still fighting going on in Baghdad between Iraqi rebels and the diehard supporters of Premier Qasim. What do we know about what is going on? Have the rebels really won this fight?

Mr. Ball: Well, of course we are getting reports by the hour and almost by the minute.

MARCH 11, 1963

The indications so far are that the fight is probably pretty close to over, that a new government is establishing order, that it will probably be able to survive and to establish itself effectively. It is always difficult to make these judgments at an early stage. It has many problems, but I think there is a very good chance that it will be an effective government of Iraq.¹

Mr. Scali: Mr. Secretary, from what we can gather, did President Nasser of the U.A.R. [United Arab Republic] inspire or support this revolt?

Mr. Ball: No, that doesn't appear to be the situation. I would suppose that this government is likely to be friendly to President Nasser, but the indications are that this is a nationalist government inspired by nationalist sentiments. It springs from the support of the Ba'ath Party, and while it is friendly and probably will be friendly to the U.A.R., I wouldn't think one would regard it as a U.A.R.-inspired government.

Mr. Morgan: Realizing we can't make hard projections so early, nevertheless this may mean a new realignment of forces in the Far East. How do you see that, and how do you see it affecting our important ally, Israel?

Mr. Ball: All the appearances would suggest that this is an anti-Communist government, that the Communists are very unhappy with what has now taken place. Premier Qasim's government, as you know, had been moving from neutralism more and more toward communism. This would appear to be a movement back in the other direction. So to the extent that it is a nationalist government, that it is an anti-Communist government, to the extent that it will be able to keep order within the country, these are all good omens. I would hope also that it will not have aggressive intentions. There are no indications that it will.

Putting Cuba in Perspective

Mr. Morgan: We still have a persistent headline situation in another part of the world. You may be fed up with it at this point, but it

¹ For text of a Department statement of Feb. 11 on U.S. recognition of the Government of Iraq, see BULLETIN of Mar. 4, 1963, p. 316.

comes out—Cuba. And developments today, as I understand it from looking at the wire, surround a charge or a demand by Senator [Hugh] Scott, a Republican from Pennsylvania, that we get the Soviet troops out of Cuba, and a reply by the other Senator from Pennsylvania, Senator [Joseph S.] Clark, a Democrat, an administration supporter, that if we attempted to deliver on Mr. Scott's demands it would get us into World War III. Do you have any comment from your spot?

Mr. Ball: You know I think it is time that we really tried to get this Cuban problem in some perspective. The President has been very clear on the situation in Cuba. Again and again he has stated the views and the position of the administration.

The Secretary of Defense, Mr. [Robert S.] McNamara, in 2 hours on television the other night [February 6] went as far as he could to give the full facts, as they are known, to the American people. He went even further than many of our people in the intelligence community would have liked to have seen him go because of the possible compromise of some intelligence mechanisms.

Now I don't think that the American people need be concerned about the resolution or the determination of the President of the United States to defend the national interests, the vital interests, of this country when he has hard facts which indicate they are seriously in danger. I would have supposed we got over that last October, and I must say I think it is a little bit extraordinary that we keep on hectoring one another over this Cuban problem. The facts are on the table. They have been told as completely as they could have been told. The President of the United States couldn't be clearer. The determination of the President of the United States has been made manifest in a way which seems to me goes beyond all possibility of challenge. Now why can't we leave it that way and behave in a mature way?

If anyone gets any evidence that there is some offensive buildup in Cuba, or the presence of offensive weapons, or some change in the military situation, the Defense Department is ready to receive that evidence, to subject it to the critical test of the whole intelligence community,

and to evaluate it and give it some informed judgment as to whether it makes any sense or not. But all these voluntary intelligence gatherers who would rather make speeches than turn the information over to the Government where it could be seriously considered—I don't think they serve the national interests very well.

Mr. Morgan: Do you see a tinge of politics here?

Mr. Ball: You know I am in the State Department, and we never make comments on anything having to do with politics.

Mr. Scali: Mr. Secretary, much of the current debate centers around the continued presence in Cuba, as you well know, of the 17,000-odd Soviet troops. Did Mr. Rusk get any encouraging word from Ambassador [Anatoliy F.] Dobrynin when he discussed this with him yesterday?

Mr. Ball: Secretary Rusk did talk with Ambassador Dobrynin about this problem. This is a matter of some continuing communications between ourselves and the Soviet Government. We will see how things develop.

Mr. Scali: Do we believe Premier Khrushchev when he says, as he did to the Canadian publisher Mr. [Roy] Thomson yesterday in Moscow, that Soviet troops and personnel are in Cuba only for the purpose of training Cubans in the use of advanced Soviet weapons?

Mr. Ball: Well, I thought President Kennedy in his last press conference [February 7] stated very fully our own appraisal of the situation, and I don't think there is any purpose to be served by my trying to amplify it.

Mr. Morgan: Secretary Ball, still on this subject, reporters and sometimes diplomats look better in hindsight than in foresight. Would you say in all candor that it would have been better for the administration, instead of waiting until it was, as you put it, "hectored" by an opposition to put out this 2 hours of intelligence last week with Secretary McNamara—it would have been better voluntarily to have done it weeks or months ago?

Mr. Ball: You know we have tried to be as candid and as open with the American people on this issue as the national interests allowed. The decision by the President to have Secretary

McNamara make the demonstration to the American people which he made last week was one which was not taken easily because, as I say, it went beyond what we would have liked to have done from the point of view of preserving intact our whole intelligence gathering apparatus. But I am not at all sure that there is much that could have been done before this. We have, as I say, at all times tried to tell the facts as we saw them.

Mr. Seali: Mr. Secretary, the continued presence of Soviet troops in Cuba, of course, is a matter of concern for the entire hemisphere. Could you tell us whether there are any plans to go to the Organization of American States to get the other American Republics to go on the record again speaking unity in demanding the withdrawal of these Soviet forces?

Mr. Ball: Well, you know the resolutions that were passed by the Organization of American States in October² were very far so far as the question of offensive weapons was concerned, and we are in constant communication with the governments of the member states of the Organization of American States. We will see how it develops. I think now is perhaps an occasion when we ought to stop talking so much about this and let the situation be watched as it is being watched on a day-by-day basis—but let it develop.

The State Department and Public Support

Mr. Morgan: Mr. Secretary, I would like to open up another line for a minute. The State Department historically is an orphan, almost, in terms of public support or support within the Government. You don't have many constituents. But rarely has there been a time, I think, when the State Department has been so critically examined in the press, and perhaps within the administration in some respects, than it is now. It is being blamed, or members of it are being blamed, for the Skybolt hassle with Britain, to a degree, Mr. de Gaulle's negative attitude toward Britain in particular, and us in general vis-a-vis Europe.

We have a situation with Canada that has caused critics to say that the State Department

was very hasty in ventilating this trouble with the Diefenbaker government, and also the effectiveness of people like Secretary Rusk and yourself as Under Secretary has also been questioned.

What is the reason for this, and do you think that the press is remiss, itself, in any of this?

Mr. Ball: You know, I wouldn't like to challenge your qualifications as a historian—

Mr. Morgan: I am not pretending to be.

Mr. Ball: --but to say this criticism is greater than it has ever been may, I think, somewhat overstate the situation. It is characteristic of Foreign Offices around the world for some of the reasons you state—they don't have constituents--to be subject to a good deal of criticism.

At the moment we live in a period when international affairs mean more to us than they have ever meant before because they mean life or death for the whole civilization of which we are a part. And I think people are very preoccupied with them and the issues are more complex and there are more nations to deal with and there are more responsibilities which the United States has assumed throughout the world. It is a very good thing that the American people are concerned with how well their State Department is doing because it is so vital to them.

I can only say this, that I am not a career diplomat, myself. I came into the State Department from outside. Most of my career has been in private life. I have never met a more dedicated or more competent body of men than the men I have encountered in the State Department. I am enormously impressed with it. I am enormously impressed by the way they go on year after year, serving their country in very difficult and complicated endeavors and, being subjected to this criticism, not being more unhappy about it.

I don't think the criticism is important until it reaches the point where it may hurt our conduct of foreign policy. I don't think it has reached that point.

Now there are obvious reasons why there can be differences of view about how these very complex and difficult affairs are worked out. And if people differ, that is fine. And if the State Department can serve any purpose by

² For text of a resolution adopted by the OAS Council on Oct. 23, see *ibid.*, Nov. 12, 1962, p. 722.